
Weekly Report of Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies (SRP) Programme

Religious Conflict

1. Anti-Islam movement PEGIDA stages protests across Europe

The Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West (PEGIDA) staged a series of protests in various European cities to oppose the influx of migrants from North Africa and the Middle East. Its members demanded for the control of Europe's borders to the migrants, citing the alleged involvement of migrants in the New Year's Day assaults on women. It is said that far right groups see Europe's migrant crisis as an opportunity to promote their anti-immigrant messages.

Keywords: Europe, Germany, Muslim, Anti-immigrant, Europe Migrant Crisis

2. Senegal fears extremism amid imam arrests, regional attacks

Senegal security forces have arrested an imam on suspicion on practising extremism in Kaolack and also made subsequent arrests of three imams being suspected of the same. Imam Alioune Badara Ndao frequent interaction with a Senegalese jihadist, Makthar Diokhane, who had trained in Nigeria with Boko Haram and intended to establish a Boko Haram cell in Senegal, stoked fears that Islam extremism had began to spread to the moderate Muslim country which has always prided itself on its tolerance and co-existence with the Christian minority.

Keywords: Senegal, Muslim, Extremism, Boko Haram

Religious Controversies

1. Ariens Co. fires seven Muslim employees over unscheduled prayer breaks

The Ariens Co. says it has fired seven Muslim employees for taking unscheduled prayer breaks, and 14 others have resigned over the issue. Its company policy allowed for two ten-minute breaks per work shift and Muslim employees are expected to perform their prayers during these breaks. However, the timing of these breaks may not coincide with the prayer timings. As a result, Muslim employees had to pray outside these break timings, leading to "unscheduled" prayer breaks and reasons for their dismissal by the company.

Keywords: United States, Muslims, Prayer breaks

2. Bosnia women protest at ban on headscarf

Approximately 2,000 Bosnian women protested against a ban on wearing the hijab, or Islamic headscarf, in judicial institutions by the highest judicial council. Although the ban is on all religious symbols, the hijab was explicitly mentioned. The protest organizer believed that the ban aimed at depriving women of their right to work and was a serious attack on the Muslim identity. Muslim political and religious leaders in Bosnia also condemned the ban.

Keywords: Bosnia, Muslim, Hijab, Protests

3. Turban-wearing Sikh actor who was barred from boarding plane is still refusing to fly home

A well-known Sikh actor and designer was not allowed to board his Aeromexico flight from Mexico City to New York after he refused security officers' request to remove his turban in public. This was after he had undergone a series of security checks prior to the request. While his demand for Aeromexico to apologise was met, Aeromexico has yet to respond to his demands of employee training on conducting security checks on Sikhs and people with religious headwear.

Keywords: Mexico, Sikhism, Racial Profiling

Secularism, Religious Freedom and New Religious Movements

1. China commands that even retired officials shun religion

China's state media has announced that the Chinese officials who are also members of the Communist party are not allowed to engage in religious activities and are to oppose what the state defines as "cults", even after they have retired. This is despite China's constitution giving its citizens the right of religious belief.

Keywords: China, religious freedom, Communist party members

Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue

1. A Paris butcher offers a lesson in interfaith ties

The Boucherie de l'Argonne in Paris demonstrates harmonious interfaith ties through the harmonious relationship of its Jewish, Muslims and Catholic employees. The store respects the religious practices of each religion and makes accommodations for employees to engage in their respective religious practices. They also promote interactions between the employees such as during lunch and this contributes to removing prejudices that followers of different faiths may have about each other.

Keywords: France, Paris, Jews, Muslims, Interfaith

2. 90 mosques across the UK open doors for interfaith dialogue

More than 90 mosques welcomed visitors of other faiths or no faiths for the second annual "Visit My Mosque Day". The Muslim Council of Britain hopes that this event will be able to allow believers of other faiths or no faiths to understand more about Islam and ultimately a more cohesive society. It also hopes to encourage as many mosques as possible to welcome visitors who are of other faiths or no faiths.

Keywords: United Kingdom, Islam, Mosques, Interfaith dialogue